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How To Run A Weight-Loss Program

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How To Run A Weight-Loss Program

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How To Run A Weight Loss Program

IT CAN BE DONE . . .

Low cost, effective weight loss programs attracting large numbers of participants can be implemented with minimal professional involvement. Competitive or incentive-based approaches have been utilized with success in a number of work settings across this country and abroad. Weight loss programs at the Zuni Indian Pueblo of New Mexico have targeted community-based groups as well as employee groups. Zuni programs have provided structure, incentive, and education for participant groups as small as 10 and as large as 300. Given that the health professionals involved contribute their time, these programs can pay for themselves. Any additional funding will allow you to present that much more attractive a package to prospective recruits.

This 10-step approach is designed to provide basic information and ideas but need not be followed to the letter. Be creative. Adapt your program to your community or employee group. Each of our programs is different from the last. Variety keeps interest alive.

STEP 1. IDENTIFY PERSONNEL

You will need to designate a Program Director, Professional Advisor, and support personnel.

Program Director:

- Must be motivated to see the program through from planning to conclusion, be able to define and delegate tasks (in a larger program), and be able to identify and solve problems as they arise. (They will!)

- Should be an enthusiastic role-model for weight reduction. He/she may be overweight, but should be diligently working to lose weight.
- Should have access to these basic resources: office supplies, display materials, copy machine, wall space, 8 to 10 hours per week.
- Should have a concrete goal: e.g., “motivate 30 overweight individuals to lose at least 5 pounds in 10 weeks,” or “motivate 100 individuals to adopt 3 new exercise or dietary behaviors for a 12-week trial period.”



Professional Advisor:

- Must be able and willing to formulate a simple educational packet based on sound principles of weight management and be available for advice and support during the program.

Support Personnel (Coordinators):

- Must have access to a scale and be willing to contribute 1 to 3 hours per week to registration, dissemination of information, weigh-ins, and record keeping. The number of coordinators depends on the size of the program: roughly one per 40 participants. If your program is to be conducted in a number of work-sites or community settings, you should have a coordinator for each such setting.

STEP 2. DEVELOP PROGRAM PLAN

Above all, a successful program must provide some element of FUN for participants and for those conducting the program. Program designs can vary but should include three principle features:

- Incentive System
- Educational Component
- Exercise Component

Incentive Systems include internal and external sources of motivation. You can cultivate internal motivation by establishing a realistic goal weight (1/2 to 1 pound per week) with each participant at registration. Require weekly weigh-ins so that the individual gets weekly feedback regarding progress toward the goal.

External motivation can be provided in numerous ways. We have always awarded a logo T-shirt (paid for by registration fees) to participants upon program completion. Additional incentive prize items may be solicited from local or regional vendors and awarded to weight-loss leaders, the most compliant participants, or to raffle winners. A “jack-pot” weight control program awards all or part of registration monies to participants who lose the most weight. A “pay-back” program allows participants to earn back portions of their initial fee (\$10 to \$20) by attending educational sessions, doing exercise, or losing weight on schedule. However, this is time-consuming and labor-intensive. We no longer use the pay-back method in Zuni.



Team competition promotes group support among team members and provides an extra incentive to lose weight as part of the team effort. Our programs have tried team sizes of 2, 4, and 35 to 50 individuals. Teams of friends or relatives work better than teams of strangers, but optimal team size has not been determined.

Be forewarned that although most people see competition as a motivator, others see it as “pressure” and may not benefit from a contest. Provide an opportunity for these individuals to participate without competing.

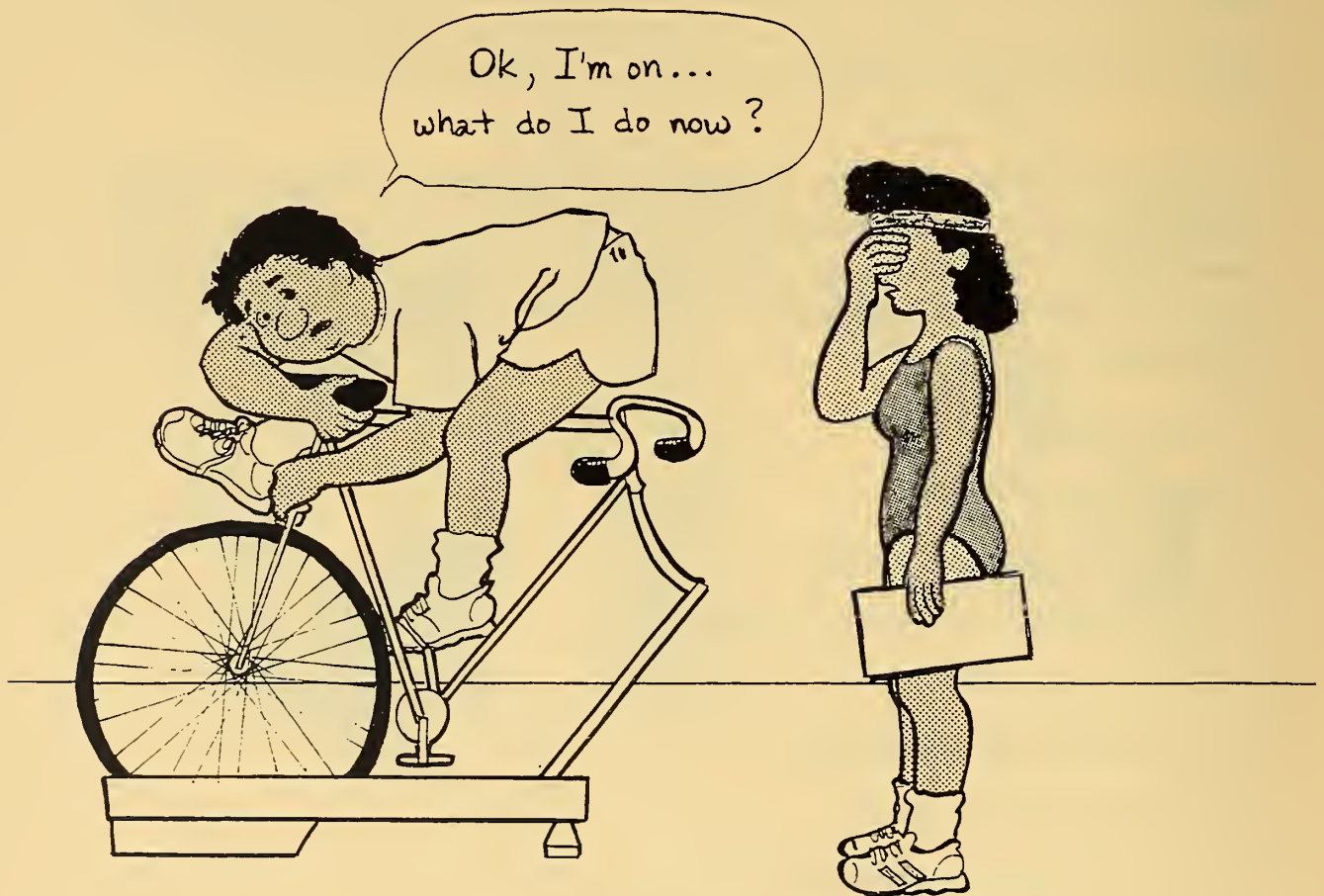
The **Educational Component** requires input from your Professional Advisor. When people are motivated to lose weight, they want information that tells them how. An incentive-based weight reduction program is the best opportunity you have to do meaningful dietary teaching that may actually be put to use.

Develop a packet of weekly or bi-weekly assignments with simple, concrete guidelines to direct participants’ efforts for that 1 to 2 week period. Print each assignment on a separate page. For instance, in a 10-week program the packet would contain 5 to 10 pages of simple guidelines for behavior change in the following areas:

- decreasing meat fat
- decreasing dairy fat
- decreasing simple sugars
- increasing complex carbohydrates
- increasing fiber
- increasing aerobic activity
- how to deal with family
- how to deal with parties and feasts
- how to deal with lapse-relapse-collapse syndrome
- changing behaviors for the long term

All educational topics should have a behavior-change objective. For instance, the objective for "Eat less meat fat" would be to prepare meals during that week that use less meat or leaner types of protein foods (e.g., pasta dishes, beans, fish, or turkey).

Weigh-ins will provide feedback to let participants know which behavior changes are most effective for them. Also at weigh-ins, coordinators can reinforce use of the packet by mentioning the goal of the following week's assignment. Each topic can be linked to your incentive system by providing points or credit for completion or written assignments.



An **Exercise Component** is essential for a successful weight loss program. Even if your community has no structured exercise program, requiring participants to complete an exercise log over the course of the program will promote physical activity. A reinforcement technique is to inform participants at registration that the log must be maintained and returned at the final weigh-in in order to complete the program and be eligible for awards. In Zuni programs, those individuals who maintained a log were more likely to achieve their weight-loss goal than those who did not.

A log-form should be provided. A recommendation to do at least 30 minutes of exercise 3 times per week should be clearly stated at the top of the form. Any aerobic activity is reportable. Encourage previously sedentary individuals to start a walking program with friends or family. Caution them to proceed at a comfortable pace. Caution them to see a physician for a medical release if they have diabetes, hypertension, or known suspected heart problems. These are individuals with the greatest need for exercise, though they may need more supervision, restrictions, or medication changes.

A partial example of an exercise log is shown below.

EXERCISE LOG

Name _____ Age _____

Aerobic Dance (A) Jogging (J) Swimming (S)
 Basketball (BB) Racquetball (RB) Tennis (T)
 Bicycle (B) Skating (SK) Walking (W)

Do some kind of exercise for at least 30 minutes, three days per week.

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	TOTAL
WEEK 1	W 30	A 60		A 60		J 45		195 min 4 days
WEEK 2		A 60		A 60				
WEEK 3						B 90		210 min 3 days
WEEK 4								

Other components of the plan to address are:

- Timing
- Working With Coordinators
- Weight Loss Goals

Timing considerations include time of year and length of program. You may achieve better weight loss results by scheduling your program to coincide with the spirit of “new beginnings” that occurs with the new year (January-March) or springtime (March-May). On the other hand, your program may help participants get through difficult times, for the overweight-prone such as Halloween through New Year’s.

Optimal program length is open to debate. About 10 weeks is short enough to sustain interest but long enough to allow newly adopted health behaviors to be maintained for a sufficient “trial period.” However, the intent of these programs is to promote life-long behavior changes and to discourage the “yo-yo” pattern of weight change that generally accompanies “crash diets.” Therefore, a 15 or 20 week program may help bring more permanent changes.

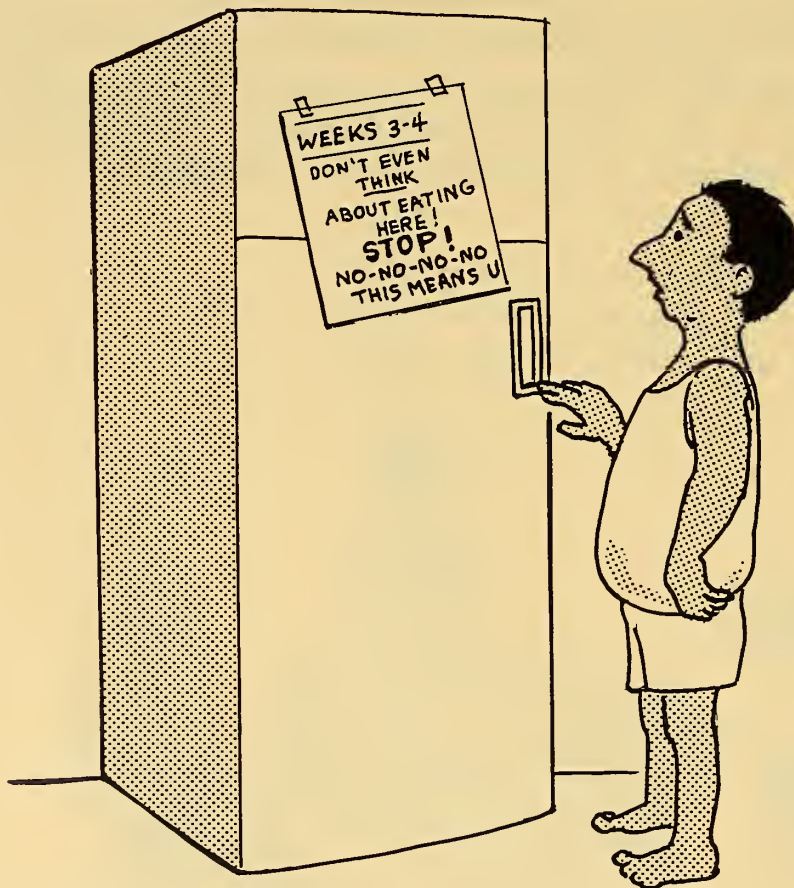


Working with Coordinators makes it possible for your program to reach a larger number of people in different structured settings such as the workplace. Volunteer coordinators in Zuni have included teachers (who supervise participants among the school's faculty and staff), a Community Health Representative Secretary (for Tribal employees), a Health Education Aide (for hospital employees), a WIC Dietary Aide (for WIC clients and staff), and numerous aerobics instructors (for various employee and community groups). In communities with high unemployment or self-employment rates, targeting only employee groups excludes a large number of potential participants. Recruiting aerobics instructors as coordinators is a natural and effective way of accessing this segment of the population.

Once you have recruited your coordinators, you should plan to meet with them twice before the start of your program: once before and once during registration week. Some coordinators will need more guidance and support than others. You will think everyone understands what needs to be done only to find out later that they did not. Your most difficult and perhaps most important task will be preparing coordinators to work with participants. They need to be able to give clear instructions, address questions, direct participants in use of educational materials, and communicate positive feedback.

Weight Loss Goals can be established in a number of ways. The simplest is 1/2 pound per week for the duration of the program as the minimum goal. In 10 weeks, 5 pounds of weight lost may not seem like a very significant amount. However, the true value of these programs is not simply the amount of weight that can be lost, but more the new eating and exercise behaviors that can be established. Also, the positive feedback gained from attaining a modest goal is preferable to falling short of a more difficult goal.

A more precise but complex, method is to base goal-weight on a fraction of each participant's percentage over recommended body weight. However, for non-professionals especially, the measurements are not always reliable and the calculations can be tricky. Since every individual and every weight problem is different, there is no way of designing a perfectly equitable contest. Don't let that hang you up. Choose a simple, modest goal, and get going!



Step 3. DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL PLAN AND MATERIALS

Working with your Professional Advisor prepare a packet of useful handouts that can be read quickly and will be readily useful to someone trying to lose weight. For a 10-week program select perhaps 5 topics such as those listed in the previous section (Educational Component). Each of the 5 handouts should have two parts: an information section and a set of recommendations for lifestyle changes. The recommendations can be reinforced at weigh-ins, in community newsletters or newspapers, by public service announcements, in weekly lectures or support groups, during structured fitness activities such as aerobics classes, or on posters and table-tents. Ask participants to post the handouts on their refrigerator for a 2-week period. Use the following guidelines in preparing your handouts:

- Use short sentences and simple words.
- Present only one or two major concepts per handout.
- The recommendations should be realistic ways for individuals in your target group to incorporate the educational concepts in their lives.
- Use graphics (no matter what quality) and humor to make your handouts more readable and noticeable.
- Don't re-invent the wheel! Use available resources to guide you.

Examples include:

The LEARN Program Manual
Kelly D. Brownell, Ph.D.
Department of Psychiatry
University of Pennsylvania
133 South 36th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-3246
(\$18.00 per copy or less in bulk)

Health Promotion Resource Center
Stanford University School of Medicine
1000 Welch Road
Palo Alto, CA 94304-1885
(415) 723-1000

Once you have developed your materials you will want them to be used. In the packet include a Behavior Change Check-List to be completed and returned at the conclusion of the program. For each possible behavior change, provide 3 check-off options:

 Made change

Did not make change

_____ Had made change before program started

CHECK LIST

Name _____

Weight lost _____

Behavior changes made _____

✓

Which changes did you make?	YES	NO
Cut down on sugary soft drinks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat breakfasts without eggs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut down on cheddar cheese	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buy whole wheat bread	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid sweet rolls for breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exercise three times per week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Switch to 2% milk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat less ice cream	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase vegetable intake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
less red meat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
dinner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For behavior changes made, you may give credit toward incentive awards. Use the honor system. It is just one more way of bringing participants to a decision point regarding new behaviors. That is the goal of this program.

"HealthNet New Mexico" has used this approach with considerable success in a statewide health promotion program called "Eat Right." By either losing 5 pounds or making 5 behavior changes in 10 weeks, the participant earns an "Eat Right" lapel pin in addition to a T-shirt.

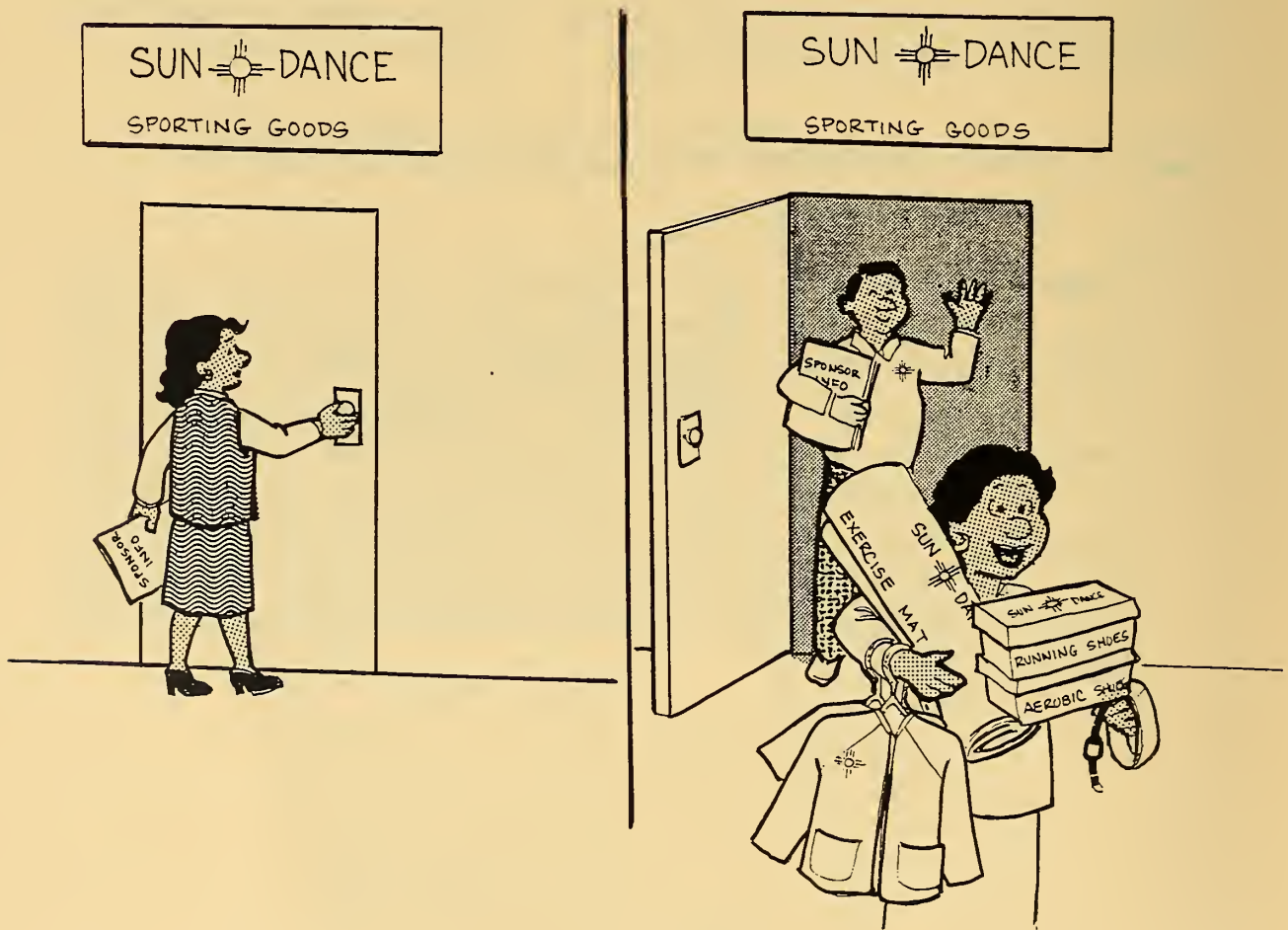
A Behavior Change Check List also gives you an additional tool for evaluating your program. You can determine which educational messages and recommendations worked better than others. Evaluation efforts will guide you in planning your next weight loss program.

Step 4. OBTAIN INCENTIVES: There are three primary sources of incentive prizes. (*)

- **Registration Fees.** A fee of \$5.00 will generally cover the cost of T-shirts if your enrollment is 100 or more. For fewer people you will have to charge slightly more, unless you have other resources or funding. You may want to forego the T-shirts and use the entry fee as a jack-pot for the winning weight-losers or raffle winners. (Losing pounds, attaining goals, doing exercise, completing home-work, and making behavior changes can all be used to award raffle chances.) The registration fee can also be used to purchase or solicit other prize items. For one program in Zuni, a sporting goods store donated 2 exercise bikes when another 2 had been purchased by the program.

(*) See "100-Mile Club": obtain from IHS Diabetes Program, 2401 12th Street, N.W., Alb., NM 87102.

- **A Program Budget.** A community health promotion organization may have money from fund-raising events, donations, or grants. Providing incentives is a legitimate use of funds because it is a major method of promoting behavior change. However, these funds should not be used as an alternative to registration fees but as an additional resource. A registration fee serves the important purpose of getting participants to “buy in” to the program. Motivated individuals are more likely to complete the program and achieve goals. Requiring a small registration fee is a good way to get participants to commit themselves to their goals.



- **Donations.** Soliciting donations requires a straightforward and diligent approach to local merchants or larger companies. Many such enterprises are very willing to support worthy projects especially where health is concerned. Present the problem, the program, and what you expect to accomplish in a succinct and open manner. You should have prepared materials ready to leave with your contact. You may need to follow up later in order to get an answer. You can improve your chances of receiving a donation by offering the company some local exposure through your program or by asking them to “match” your purchase of their product with an equal-sized or larger contribution.

It is a good idea to arrange 2 sets of incentive awards. First should be the award that everyone receives for finishing the program (T-shirt or other item that will provide some motivation); second “special achievement awards” for individuals who lose more weight, achieve goals, or accumulate points in the ways described above. We are finding that the monetary value of the latter set of awards does not necessarily contribute to level of motivation or program success. Don’t feel compelled to come up with “exciting and glamorous” prizes.

Step 5. CONSTRUCT SET OF RULES

Work with your coordinators and professional advisor on formulating the rules. It helps to have several people offering ideas and inspecting for problems. Carefully review your set of rules for potential sources of confusion. It may be perfectly clear to you because you have thought about it at considerable length, but it may not be clear to a participant reading it for the first time. Keep the rules as simple as possible.



Below is a sample set of rules followed by alternatives. They are based on programs conducted in Zuni. Again, you may want to make changes based on your target population or your own creativity. Make this program fun and interesting to you.

Rules

1. Exercise Log and Behavior Change Check List must be filled in and returned to your coordinator at final weigh-in to complete the program and receive T-shirt.
2. Once you have registered, read handout #1 from your packet. Post it on your refrigerator. If you have not already done so, try out the recommended changes for 2 weeks. Then decide if you will keep practicing what you have tried out. Every 2 weeks repeat the process with the next handout.
3. Weigh in every week during the time set by your coordinator. Weigh without shoes on the same scale each time. Do not weigh immediately after exercise.
4. Keep track of your weekly weight on the graph below. Make it your goal to lose 1/2 pound per week or more without regaining lost weight. Therefore, your goal for this 10-week program is to lose 5 pounds or more but not more than 20 pounds.
5. Special prizes will be awarded to the 10 participants who lose the most weight without losing more than 20 pounds. All those who finish the program will win a T-shirt with the contest logo. All those who lost 5 pounds or more will receive an additional award (a small prize to commemorate goal achievement).
6. Anyone with diabetes, unexplained chest pain, or known or suspected heart disease should consult their physician if they have not already been cleared for exercise and weight reduction.

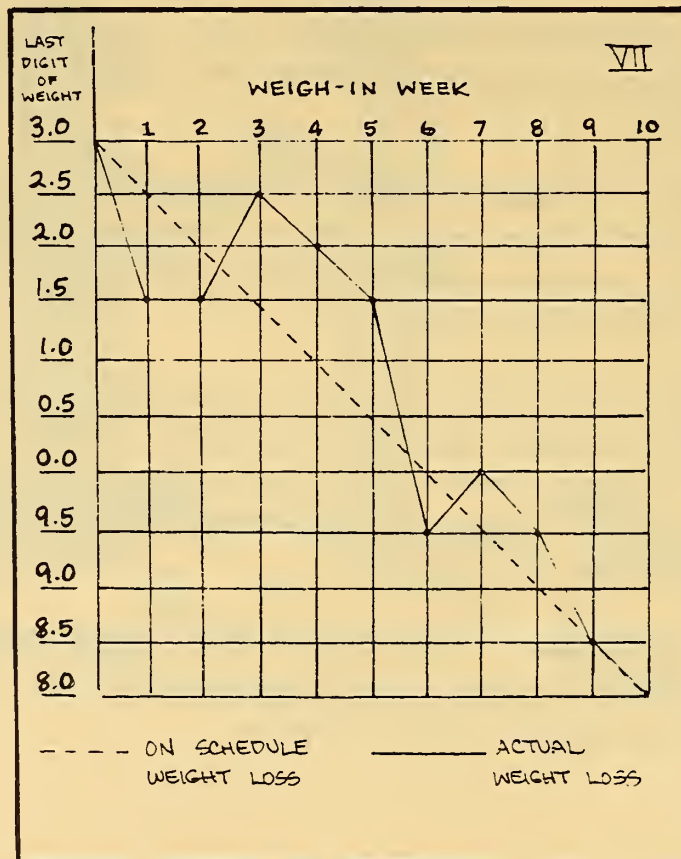
ALTERNATIVE RULES

(TEAMS): Register as a member of a 4-person team. At the end of ten weeks the team with the most weight-loss (or highest point total) will be the contest winners. You are encouraged to support your team-mates' weight reduction efforts.

(POINTS): Points will be awarded on a weekly basis as follows:

Missed weigh-in 0 points
 Weighed-in over weekly goal weight 1 point
 Weighed-in at or under weekly goal weight 2 points

"Goal weight" is 1/2 pound per week, cumulative. "goal weight" is indicated by the dotted line on the graph below. Competition winner is the individual (or team) with the most points at the end of 10 Weeks.



(One copy of this graph should be included in the educational packet for the participant to plot progress on a weekly basis. Another copy should be posted near the weigh-in site and updated weekly by the coordinator. This is a tremendous reinforcement technique as well as a promotional tool.)

Step 6. PROMOTE AND RECRUIT

In a non-competitive weight loss program you can afford to let people register up to a week after the start date. However, registration should be limited to the week before the start date of a weight loss contest. Contest promotion should begin 2-4 weeks beforehand. Despite tedious planning, many health promotion programs lose their potential impact because of inadequate promotion. After you have obtained permission from management or government, there are many ways to promote interest in your program:

- Begin with a “teaser message” 2 weeks before registration. (e.g., “TEAM WEIGHT LOSS IS COMING!!”)
- The following week blanket your target area (community or workplace) with posters announcing the name of your contest, the most basic rules, the awards and prizes, and the fees, times, and places for registration. (Use graphics no matter how primitive they look!)
- During the week of registration intensify your promotion efforts with presentations at various meetings, work-sites, schools, churches, and community centers.
- Ask health care providers to refer patients who need to lose weight.

- Submit public service announcements to your local radio stations.
- Employ high visibility methods to reach your target group: table-tents, paycheck stuffers, hand-bills, sandwich boards, memos.



Step 7. REGISTER PARTICIPANTS

Sign up participants (or teams) at your registration center for an entire week. If you have a number of coordinators in different locations ask them to conduct registration as well. Announce publicly when registration will close. Registration should include the following:

- Rules review and orientation to educational packet. Again, make sure coordinators are able and willing to get the key points across. Otherwise you will have disgruntled and confused participants later on.
- Participant provides basic information including name, sex, age, phone, address, occupation, and (if appropriate) T-shirt size and team name. Include any other information you wish to use later in evaluating the results of your program. This may include, for instance, ethnic group, personal weight-loss goal, previous history of weight control or exercise, or answers to a few questions regarding opinion, knowledge, or behavior that may be used in evaluating results. We have always restricted our pre-questionnaires to one page. Sign-out could also include a post-questionnaire regarding their experience in or attitude toward this program.
- Measurement of weight and height (without shoes). Depending on time, resources, and expertise, you may want to collect other measurements such as body circumferences or skin-fold thicknesses that can be of use to the participant or the evaluator of your program.
- Payment of fee, issuance of simple receipt, and signature of registrar on form for organizational purposes. (You may want to compare the results of groups under the supervision of different coordinators.)

Step 8. PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND PUBLIC RECOGNITION

Public recognition not only motivates participants but also raises public awareness of your program and enhances participation in future programs. Although there is a lot of overlap in feedback techniques and publicity efforts, methods for seeking and supplying both are listed separately below:

Providing Feedback

- It helps to say “good job” or “it’s nice to see you here!” when a participant comes to weigh-in or exercise class. And it is helpful to notice what participants have in their shopping carts or to acknowledge changes they have indicated



on their Behavior Change Check List. Psychologists have shown that one of the most effective behavior reinforcing techniques is a positive verbal cue from a program official delivered while the participant is practicing that behavior you want reinforced. Giving the verbal cue after the behavior has been completed is also reinforcing, but the closer it is to the behavior, the better.

- Provide visual feedback by displaying the coordinator's copies of the Weight Loss Graphs on a bulletin board near the weigh-in site. Use numbers instead of names to protect confidentiality. For team competitions group graphs together with team-mates. Seeing someone else's progress is inspiring. Non-participants also become interested in the program.

- For team competitions plot all team's weight loss totals (or point totals) on a display board to be updated weekly. Team names (e.g. "Fat-Busters," "Big Hunks") and progress display make for good public perusal.

- Midway through the program make a public service announcement regarding total weight lost to date, team standings, or other important data. At that time also re-announce prizes to be given away and plans for an awards ceremony, banquet, or other event for program finishers.

Publicity

- Put out a news release at the end of registration week. Timing is important because the various media like to report on happenings while they are new. (That's why they call it "news.") On the other hand, you don't really have a program until people are signed up and doing it. Your news release should be double-spaced, no more than 2 pages, and it should contain the important news-worthy features of your program: why you are conducting a weight loss program, how many signed up, the nature of the signed up, the program's goals, and interesting quotes from participants and program sponsors.

- Contact your local papers, TV, and radio stations to tell reporters you are sending them a release. Offer to give them an interview or photo session at an exercise class or weigh-in. The media is always looking for human interest and health-related stories, especially if it is something new or highly significant for your community. For media stories ask individual participants if they would be willing to be interviewed or photographed. Ask the news photographer to be careful not to include participants who have not given permission.
- National media including major newspapers, magazines, and news shows are sometimes interested in human interest stories tucked away in small or rural communities. Be on the look-out for media that cover such stories, and try to make contact with a reporter from those news sources.
- The amount of media attention you receive is directly proportional to the effort you put into making your program known.

Step 9. CONCLUDE PROGRAM AND PRESENT AWARDS

Sign-out is an important transition. Individuals are going from practicing new behaviors within the framework of your program to continuing the practice of those behaviors on their own. Make their experience a positive one. Leave



them with a sense that this is a new beginning, not an end in itself. This message can be communicated in the educational packet with a recommendation for repeating the behavior-trial process several times. It should also be clearly reinforced in words spoken at the final weigh-in and the awards ceremony. Otherwise, your program may be just one phase of a life-long history of “yo-yo dieting.” To conclude your program:

- Make it clear that participants are to return completed Behavior Change Check Lists and Exercise Logs at the final weigh-in in order to receive their T-shirt and be eligible for awards. However, if they have lost these documents, note that they did not return them (this will be useful in your evaluation), and have blanks on hand for them to estimate their behavior changes and amount of exercise. It is a bad practice to keep a T-shirt from someone who wants it, even though he or she made some technical mistakes.
- For evaluation purposes you may want to have participants complete a sign-out questionnaire regarding the effectiveness and enjoyability of the program and the degree to which they followed the educational processes set up in the packet. This is to help you be more successful with your next program.
- If you have groups under different coordinators, be certain to keep the results separate for comparative evaluation. Don't forget to include names on Exercise Logs and Behavior Change Check Lists.

- Plan an awards event (public ceremony, family potluck, games, event, dance, or party) for about one week following the final weigh-in. You will need this time to accommodate stragglers (participants and coordinators) and get results finalized. The important ingredients of this event are fun, recognition, and presentation of the awards. In Zuni, we have put on skits, organized "New-Games," held dance parties with a live band, and had formal ceremonies with outside dignitaries. The message to get across is: "This is important, and you succeeded by trying!"

Step 10. EVALUATE PROGRAM

By collecting demographic data, objective measurements and subjective information, you will be able to evaluate your program in a number of useful ways. For the purpose of making your next program more effective, you can



review your data in a fairly informal manner. But an evaluation intended for publication or formal presentation will require a more rigorous epidemiological or statistical review, and you may need help from someone with expertise in these areas.

Remember that your evaluation begins when you are planning your program. You must think ahead to what information you would like to collect as participants start and finish so that you can design simple questionnaires, registration forms, logs, and check lists.

It is helpful to look at program evaluation in the context of 3 different kinds of objectives: PROCESS objectives, IMPACT objectives, and OUTCOME objectives. These objectives determine the types of evaluations described below:

PROCESS EVALUATIONS include a description of your program and the target population, as well as statistics regarding registration, attrition, and program completion. This information is tremendously helpful to others trying to get their own weight-loss programs started. Demographic information about participants reveals where and how future recruitment efforts should be directed. Registration and attrition results, when compared to objectives, are a measure of program success in the areas of recruitment and motivation. Use anecdotal reports to describe how the program functioned best and where it missed the boat. Program descriptions provide ideas and inspiration to others in the field of health promotion.

IMPACT EVALUATIONS include an analysis of learning brought about by the program and the adoption of new behaviors. The real intent of a weight loss program is to promote long-term weight control which can only be brought about by behavior change. Evaluating behavior change will be more subjective than evaluating hard data, but it provides useful information for future planning nonetheless.

To evaluate exercise practices, use the Exercise Log to determine how much and what types of exercise were done. Determine by questionnaire how this exercise pattern differed from previous behavior, how positive or negative the experience was, how likely participants were to continue or increase their exercise level, etc. Dietary practices can be analyzed in the same way using the Behavior Change Check List and a questionnaire.

OUTCOME EVALUATIONS center on the measurable results of the program that indicate an improvement in health or a lowering of health risk. Determine the number achieving program goal, total weight lost, average weight lost per person, number who lost weight, average weight loss among those who lost weight, number who did not lose weight, the average weight gain among those who gained weight, etc. If you collected anthropometric data such as waist circumference or skin-fold thickness, it would be useful in this kind of evaluation.

It may be useful to apply comparative techniques to the data. That is, compare the average weight loss in females to that in males, or the percent of females achieving goal vs. males achieving goal. Other groups that could be compared are those employed outside the home vs. those not employed outside the home,

those greater than 40% overweight vs. those less than 40% overweight, and groupings based on educational level, age-groups, and number of previous programs participated in. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to determine the types of individuals who do well with your program and those who don't. Knowing that information will lead you to changes in the planning of your next program.

Finally, the true effectiveness of your program is in the long-term result. The most objective and easily accessed piece of data you could use is body weight. You may have access to your program participants through hospital charts. If not, it would still be possible to contact most participants for a weight after 2, 5, or even 10 years.

CONCLUSION

This manual provides a 10-step approach with ideas and examples to get you started with your weight loss program. Obesity is a major health problem in most modern populations. You can have an immediate impact by developing a simple plan and getting started.

The most extensive chapter in this manual deals with developing a program plan. No doubt, it is of key importance, but don't get bogged down in the planning process. Keep your sights on getting started.

Have fun with your program. If you have a new idea or a different approach, try it out and let us know about it. The field of health promotion can benefit from your creativity only if you share your results.

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